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USDA Joins Southern University in Symposium Celebration

Personnel from agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture joined Southern University faculty and supporters in celebrating the eight annual Blacks in Agricultural, Family, and Consumer Sciences Awareness Symposium recently on the campus of Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana as one way to support and celebrate Black History Month. The theme of the program was "Urban Opportunities: Connecting our Youth with Agricultural, Family, and Consumer Sciences."

"The symposium served as forum to highlight careers, urban and rural, in the field of agriculture, family, and consumer sciences," explained Dr. Dawn Mellion-Patin, symposium chairperson. "Significant accomplishments of African-Americans in shaping the history of this nation were also highlighted during the program."

Barry Carpenter, Deputy Administrator of the Livestock and Seed Program of the Agricultural Marketing Service made a presentation on career opportunities with the Agricultural Marketing Service and other agencies of USDA.

Judge Alonzo Harris of Opelousas, Louisiana, was the keynote speaker at the event and emphasized responsibility, hard work, family values, and education as key ingredients to a successful career and life. "You can be whatever you want to be in life," said Judge Harris. "But, you have to work hard and study hard. The opportunities are there, but employers are looking for the best students."

Students from Booker T. Washington High School, Martin Luther King Christian Academy, Park Elementary, Baker High School, and Capitol High School participated in Black History Fact Bowls during the symposium, and musical selections were conducted by the Park Elementary School Choir.

Personnel from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and Louisiana Family Farm Technical Assistance Project also participated in the program. Dr. Mellion-Patin, Director, Louisiana Family Farm Technical Assistance Project, planned and coordinated the event that involved about 120 people.